

I need you to do me a favor.

Try if you will to think of me as my 16-year-old self, the younger beardless me.

Now while you're thinking try to add onto it. The Hobbs Field faithful, the dedicated Brown Bear. Add more, the pain of not being a baseball captain, the joy of winning my senior canoe tilt. I was like each of you, I brushed my teeth, washed my hands, and bragged about mail just like every other camper.

However, there was one key trait I was missing, one factor that made me weaker than the rest. One word. Motivation. Motivation was something I didn't have, I wanted to do well, I wanted to succeed don't get me wrong. But I didn't lay it all on the line for success, I wasn't "all in." If I didn't see the value in something, I wouldn't put in the 110%.

Faster than I had time to realize it was week four. I was just recovering from a sickness, and I wasn't at my full strength. Sure enough, there I was on the porch of the Alumni House still groggy from an afternoon nap. Baseball counsellor and Long Walk leader Jim MacDougall told me I wasn't ready for the trip. I wasn't prepared to complete the week's trek had it started that day. We agreed to five loops a day. Five loops a day to get me prepared for Long Walk.

I did the five loops, but I did no more. I went on Long Walk, and I struggled. On day two of Long Walk, I nearly quit. After a particularly difficult day in the rain, I felt as though I needed to take myself off the hike. That day I slowed the group down. I felt as though for the group's best outcome, I needed to remove myself from the hike. I wasn't "All in."

After some convincing, I stayed on the trip. I struggled through the rest of the days and did not make the most of the opportunity in front of me. I missed out. I finished the hike and was proud of the work I had done to finish the week, but I still felt like something was unfinished. I had struggled when my closest friends excelled. I was on the outside looking in.

The very next summer I had an opportunity in front of me again. As I arrived home one rainy afternoon, I looked towards my grandfather's house and saw flashing lights. An Ambulance. I ran fearing the worst. Expecting the worst. As I got closer there he was, in a wheelchair followed by two EMTs.

‘Matt, I have Cancer. Matt, I have Cancer’

As I heard the words come from my grandfather’s mouth, I couldn’t help but feel the rug pulled out from under me. My own grandfather had Cancer. As he drove off to the hospital, I stood, unable to move. Thoughts rushing through my head, I walked back to my house, ignoring the rain.

After years of seeing my grandfather as an inspiration, as a motivation, and as a friend, I had finally seen him weak. A man I never expected to show the slightest bit of pain was now telling me he did not have much time left. I walked home with no regard for the rain. I sat down, turned on the TV to whatever channel was already on, and cried. I cried. I lost all control.

As a runner he was the ultimate inspiration. Rain or shine he would run his mile everyday. Rain or shine he would be out there.

Last summer was one of the toughest times of my life. Not only was I away from Pasquaney, but my grandfather had Cancer, my friends group was breaking apart, and I had torn my hamstring for the second time. I felt as though I had no where to go and few people to turn to.

So I turned to track. At the time I had been competing in track and field for eight seasons, and it had become apart of me. I used track as a stress relief. I pushed myself when running, when I was throwing, when I was surrounded by a team. I used this time as a way of forgetting about the struggles I had to deal with.

One night after being unable to sleep, it all clicked. I decided I wanted to become a collegiate track athlete. For once I felt motivated, I felt prepared. I was ready to put everything on the line in order to reach my goal. I was “All in.” I told myself that if my grandfather could run a mile everyday at his age, I could and should do the same.

This past year I worked harder than I ever worked before. I made sure that whatever my outcome, I would have given it all I could give.

After I injured my hamstring for the third time this past winter, I told myself it was time for a change. No college would take an injury prone sprinter with little history of success. It just wouldn't happen. I told myself there had to be a different way.

So, I started throwing Javelin again. But this time, I would be more serious about it. This time I would be “All in.” The first competition I was still not healthy enough to run sprints, so my coach decided to have me throw. He told me not to worry too much about it because even though I was not prepared I could use it as practice for future competition. My first throw in three years I threw 102.3 feet, a personal best. As the official read out the distance my coach did a double take. He immediately rushed to the tape to see if the official made a mistake. 102.3 the official distance was over a thirty-foot difference from my last time throwing, a shocking change for an athlete with such little experience.

That day I ended up finishing fifth in the entire meet after throwing farther and farther in each of my following throws. My coach came to me and told me I had to be fully committed to Javelin. I had to be “All in.”

For the rest of the season I worked. My peers began following me, and I grew a bigger and bigger name in the Maine track and field world. I wrote a blog for a website called Milesplit on how one can overcome injuries. I became friends with state champions and legendary

coaches. For me, my track career was finally starting to take shape. Four years in the making and I've finally reached a point where I can be proud.

By valuing the struggle, asking for help, and experiencing what you can't learn in a book I have reached, "All in."

Whether we are here or away from Pasquaney, being "All in" is essential. Whether you are competing in a sporting event, studying for a test or hiking through the Whites with your closest friends, being "All in" will make your time passable or memorable.

Next spring, I will be competing in javelin at Wheelock College. Next spring, I will have completed my goal. No matter what your goal is, you can achieve it by being "All in."